Indeed those who have faith and do righteous deeds—it is they who are the best of creatures.

(Quran 98:7)

THE PRISTINE VALUES OF THE RIGHTEOUS

"A Person is either your brother in faith or your equal in humanity"

Imam Ali

Sakina Noor

Introduction and forward

The Quran is the literal word of God, which The Almighty God revealed to Prophet Muhammad through the Angel Gabriel.

"The revelation of The Book is from God, the all Mighty, the all Wise." (Qur'an 39:1)

113 chapters in the Quran, begin with the words-**in the name of God-the compassionate, the merciful.** This kind and loving God has instructed his creation to also practice compassion and mercy in their daily lives.

Pre Islamic Arabs were notorious for certain characteristics such as arrogance, boastfulness, and excessive love of plunder. There was no rule of law or central government. Wars were fought on the flimsiest of excuses, often leading to acts of horrendous cruelty and massacre.

Pre Islamic Arabia was a male-dominated society. Women had no status of any kind. They were treated like cattle. A savage custom of the Arabs was to bury their female infants alive.

It was in these times that God sent the Prophet Muhammad to bring these people from the darkness of ignorance to the light of faith.

He it is Who has raised among the Unschooled people a Messenger from among themselves who recites unto them His Signs, and purifies them, and teaches them the Book and wisdom, although they had been, before, in clear misguidance (Quran 62:2)

The Prophet Muhammad was born and brought up in a family of devout monotheists, who were descendants of Prophet Abraham.

For forty years, before he proclaimed prophet hood, Prophet Muhammad built a reputation amongst the people, as an exemplar of outstanding manners and etiquette. In the following verses, God himself testifies to Prophet Muhammad's character

And indeed you (Muhammad) possess a great character (Quran 68: 4)

Indeed in the Messenger of God you have a good example to follow (Quran 32.21)

These verses refer specifically to the qualities the prophet displayed when interacting with people, whether it was when standing up for the truth or practicing patience with the people

when they insulted mocked and even stoned him. These are the qualities that made the Prophet a role model on how to interact successfully with others in a society.

In the holy Qur'an, God has addressed Prophet Muhammad on his kind and gentle manner:

'Thus it is due to the mercy from God that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough, hard-hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you' (Quran3:159).

A man, who spent ten years with the prophet, stated: "*Throughout my stay with the prophet Muhammad, I never heard an indecent word from his lips and never found him rude to anyone. He spoke very politely. He was kind to everyone."*

There are many narrations testifying the behavior of the prophet. A few are presented below;

The Holy Prophet spoke in short, meaningful sentences and never interrupted anybody's speech. (Excerpt from the book koh ul basar pg69)

He never spoke with a gloomy face, nor did he ever speak in a rough manner. The Holy Prophet would never permit anybody to

backbite others and said, "I want to meet people with a loving heart."(Excerpt from the book Bihar al anwar vol16 pg226-228)

The following is quoted from the book Sunan Nabi; *The Noble Prophet used to patch his own clothes, mend his sandals, milk his sheep, eat with the slaves, sit on the ground.. He was not ashamed to carry his own groceries and other items from the market to his family. He would shake hands with the rich and the poor alike and he would not take his hand back from the hand of the other person until that person himself withdrew his hand. He would greet anyone who came to him whether rich or poor, old or young. He would never look down on what he was offered, even if it was a dry date. He had few possessions, had a kind nature, was sociable, cheerful, always smiling but without laughing, always sad but without frowning, humble without losing self-respect, generous without being extravagant, softhearted and merciful to every Muslim* (Sunan Nabi pp. 62 -63)

George Bernard Shaw writes: He was by far the most remarkable man that ever set foot on this earth. He preached a religion, founded a

state, built a nation, laid down a moral code, initiated numerous social and political reforms, established a powerful and dynamic society to practice and represent his teachings and completely revolutionized the worlds of human thought and behavior for all times to come."(The Genuine Islam, Vol. 1, 1936)

Another historian, Washington Irving writes: *In his private dealings he was just. He treated friends and strangers, the rich and poor, the powerful and weak, with equity, and was beloved by the common people for the affability with which he received them, and listened to their complaints.* Excerpt from book Mahomet and His Successors'

Just like Jesus, who had twelve disciples, prophet Muhammad also had twelve **divinely appointed** successors called Imams, who would continue to guide the generations after the prophet. This is also stated in *Genesis 17:20 And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation.*

The first successor was Ali, who was also like the prophet, a descendant of Abraham. Ali was married to the Prophet's only daughter Fatima. The chain of succession followed from Ali to

his children Hassan and Hussain. God had chosen the members of this holy family to be his representatives on earth and hence purified them for this task. The following verse testifies to this;

Indeed God desires to repel all impurity from you, O People of the (prophet's) Household, and purify you with a thorough purification. (Quran 33:33)

The chain of succession continued through the descendants of this holy family, until it reached the 12th successor-the awaited savior Imam Mehdi. The sacred message had to be carried out by only these individuals as narrated by the prophet during his last days:

I am leaving among you Two Weighty Things: the Book of God and my`family. So long as you (simultaneously) uphold both of them, you will never be misled after me.
Unfortunately, history shows that many people chose to ignore this timeless advice.

In this book, we take a few of the many narrations and incidents from the lives of these purified individuals to serve as the finest examples of the moral and ethical teachings of the religion of Islam.

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1. ALTRUISM

"They give preference to them over themselves - even though poverty may afflict them (Quran 59:9)."

Prophet Muhammad was the best example of altruism. He used to give priority to the poor even before himself. He used to give them his food while he suffered hunger. He turned a community that was self-centered and selfish into altruistic and giving believers.

A story that has been narrated by many say that when they were young, the grandsons of the holy prophet- Hassan and Hussain fell sick, the prophet, suggested to the parents Ali and Fatima make a vow to God that they will fast for three days in a prayer for the recovery of their children.

When they were better, Ali and Fatima prepared to fulfill the vow. The two children insisted to be included in the fast. Even their maid Fiza asked to join in.

There was enough just enough barley in the house to support one meal a day for three days.

Fatima ground the barley into flour and apportioned loaves of bread for each member of the family.

However, on each of the three days, when the family sat to break their fast, a hungry person called at their door. On the first day a beggar came asking for food, the next day an orphan knocked on the door saying he had not eaten for days and on the third day a freed captive asked for some food. Each time, the big-hearted members of the house, including the maid, voluntarily and happily gave away their portion of the bread and all broke their fast with water. In praise of this selfless act, God revealed the following verse of the Quran;

They fulfill vows and fear a day the evil of which shall be spreading far and wide. And they give food out of love for Him to the poor and the orphan and the captive. We only feed you for God's sake; we desire from you neither reward nor thanks: (Quran, 76:7-12)

In the book "know that I am Fatima Vol2, it is written that "On the eve of her wedding, Fatima took off her new wedding dress and gave it to a poor young woman. The Prophet visited her and found that she was not wearing her wedding dress. He asked why and she said, 'O

father, a poor young woman knocked the door asking for a dress. I wanted to give her my old dress but then I remembered the verse;

"You will not attain unto piety until you spend of that which you love." (Quran 3:92)
Therefore, I gave her my new dress that I loved.

Another incident is that once, after the evening prayer in the mosque, a man stood up from the congregation and said: "I am poor and I have not eaten in days!" The Holy Prophet asked: "Who among you will give food to this man?" Ali stood up and volunteered to take man to his home.

When Ali reached his home, Fatima informed him that there was just enough food in the house for one person. Ali to avoid the man being embarrassed put out the lamp, and invited the man to the dinner mat and gave the man the food as he himself pretended to eat. In the dark the man did not notice that Ali did not eat.

2. ANIMAL RIGHTS

And there is no animal that walks upon the earth, nor a bird that flies with its two wings but (they are) communities like yourselves; We have not neglected anything in the Book, then to their Lord shall they be gathered.
(Quran 6:38).

Cruelty to animals is forbidden in Islam. As much as we treat our fellow humans with respect, we must also handle all other living things with kindness, especially those for whom we are responsible. God created animals to serve us and provide us with our various needs and we should be grateful for that and treat them well.

Prophet Muhammad was kind to every living creature and this kindness knew no limits. He was very kind to animals as well. Arabs, before the advent of Islam were very unkind to their animals. It was very common in Arabia to put a collar round the neck of a camel, but this practice was stopped on the Prophet's orders.

Once the Prophet was on a journey with his companions and they stopped for rest at a certain place. A bird had laid an egg there. A man took away the egg and the bird began

beating her wings in a state of great distress. When the Prophet found out, he asked the man to return the egg to the nest.

Once the prophet saw a camel whose belly had shrunk to it's back because of not being fed. He admonished the owner saying, *"Fear God in your treatment of these animals who cannot speak."*

At another time, he was walking when he saw a group of people torturing an animal with a hot iron. He told them to stop straightaway and warned them that those who indulged such inhuman acts were cursed by God. The Prophet always emphasized good treatment of animals by telling his companions the following story.

"One day, a man was travelling in the desert. The heat was extreme and he was very thirsty. Suddenly he came across a well and pleased with his find, he quickly drew up some water and drank it. Having quenched his thirst, he was about to walk away when he noticed a dog nearby who was parched.

The man drew up some more water and gave it to the dog to drink. In return for this one act one kindness, God forgave all his sins!"

Below are some of the rights that animals have over their owners according to Islam:

a) Animals should always be offered their own kind of food to eat and not be forced to eat what the owner is eating.

b) When travelling, if they reach a source of water, the owner should allow the animal to quench it's thirst first.

c) When encouraging an animal to move i.e. beasts of burden, then one should not hit it on the face or head.

d) When riders stop to talk to each other, they should dismount and converse so that the animal is not tired by their weight.

e) Animals should not be forced to carry more than they can reasonably carry.

f) The owners should not make their animals walk on rough or uneven ground.

The prophet's successor Imam Ali has stated in a letter to his officials;
Avoiding to separate the animals and their babies: "Do not separate the mother camel and her baby, and don't milk it in a way that little milk is left for the baby".

3. CARING FOR ORPHANS

And they ask you concerning the orphans Say: To set right for them (their affairs) is good (Quran 2:220)

And give to the orphans their property, and do not substitute worthless (things) for (their) good (ones), and do not devour their property (as an addition) to your own property; this is surely a great crime. (Quran 4:2)

..as for the orphan, do not oppress (him). (Quran 93:9)

Islam gives a lot of importance to the welfare of orphans in society. To this effect, Prophet Muhammad has narrated:
"If anyone from you becomes the guardian of an orphan and deals kindly with them, and he fulfills these actions satisfactorily, and he strokes the head of the orphan with sympathy, then Allah necessarily writes good deeds equivalent to the hair covered by his hand and forgives sins equal to the number of hair, and raises his position in grades equal to the hair of

the orphan's head." *Excerpt from the book greater sins*

Historians have narrated that the Prophet's successor Imam Ali was very kind to children, especially to orphans. If he ever saw an orphan crying, he would stop whatever he was doing, bend down, wipe away the child's tears, put his hand on the child's shoulder and say, "My child, why are you crying? Has someone hurt you? Come; let me take you to my house. Ali would take the child home, give him sweets and treat him better than any father.

Ali has also warned; "*Beware! Beware! Do not be neglectful of orphans. I warn you again, never leave an orphan hungry and unprotected."*

Prophet Muhammad's wife Khadija was known as the "Mother of the Orphans" because of the way she cared for the orphans just like a mother would look after her own children.

A famous writer described Khadija's house as a sanctuary for every orphan who did not have anyone to depend on, every woman who was homeless or every parent who needed food for their children.

4. Envy

…Or do they envy [other] people because of what God has given them of His bounty? (Qur'an, 4:54)

Envy is one of the deadliest diseases of the spiritual heart and it produces additional vices such as backbiting, slandering, abuse, taunting, and torturing, all of which are grave sins. This hideous condition makes the human heart so narrow and gloomy that it's effects pervade the realm of one's inner and outer being.

The Quran mentions the first murder of humankind which occurred between Prophet Adam's two sons Habeel (Abel) and Qabeel (Kane) was due to envy.

The Quran also mentions the story of Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) and dedicated a whole chapter to narrate his story which is cited as "the best of stories" according to God, due to its richness in lessons of morality and ethics. Prophet Yusuf was thrown into the well by his elder brothers after the feeling of jealousy increased in their

hearts when they observed that Yusuf was specially loved by their father.

The Prophet has advised, *"Beware of envy because indeed envy destroys good deeds in the same manner as fire destroys wood."* *(Ainul Hayat)*

The prophet's successor Imam Ali said:
"Envy is a great trap of Satan."

God said to The Prophet:
(O Muhammad!) Your Lord knows all of that what they have hidden in their hearts.(Quran 16:74)

In explaining the meaning of this verse, the Prophet said God knows the enmity and envy of the hypocrites against the prophet and his family, particularly Ali, who was his successor.

Imam Ali has said*: "The envious person looks like a loving friend by his speech, but hides malice behind his actions, he is friend only by name but by his characteristics, he is an enemy."*

5. EQUAL TREATMENT OF CHILDREN

"When they get tidings of a daughter their faces turn dark with shame; anger encompasses them and they hide their faces from others." (Qur'an, 16:58-59)

The people of Arabia, before the advent of Islam, used to practice the abhorrent act of burying their daughters. This customary practice was either in fear of becoming impoverished by providing for them, since they were not regarded as a source of future income, or suffering shame and ridicule from the society that they did not beget a son. Thus poverty and pride both were responsible for this heinous crime. The Quranic verse above describes the state of mind of a man who hears of the birth of a daughter instead of a son.

The Quran also warns of the dire consequences of killing babies in these words concerning the Day of Judgement:

And when the female infant is buried alive is questioned –for what crime was she killed (Quran 81:8-9)

The Holy Prophet vehemently opposed this horrible act and said that the birth of a girl is not a matter of humiliation to a family, but rather a source of great pride and honor.

On the day that his beloved daughter Fatima was born, the prophet was waiting outside his house with a few companions. As soon as he was informed that his wife Khadija had given birth to a baby girl, the prophet was overcome with immense joy and he immediately offered his thanks to God. But when the prophet saw the faces of his companions he found them downcast. He was upset with them and said, "What has happened to you? God has blessed me with a flower whose fragrance I smell. God has ensured sustenance for her too as He would for a son!"

The Prophet (s) has said: "*Anyone who brings up two daughters in a proper and kind manner, they will be very close to me on the day of Judgment".*

The Prophet of Islam had only one daughter named Fatima. Fatima grew up at a difficult time in the prophet's life. He had just declared his prophet hood and the people of Mecca were very hostile to the new faith. Fatima witnessed the harassments and insults and was deeply affected by the persecution that her father had to endure.

There are many stories of how Fatima, even though a young child, would come to the defense of her father in the face of hostilities. Once, while her father was praying, someone threw filth on the prophet. Fatima ran to her father and yelled at the men while wiping off the filth from her beloved father.

Whenever Fatima would enter a room to see her father, the prophet would rise to his feet, kiss her hand and seat her where he was seated. And when he came to see her, she would stand up, kiss his hand and seat him where she was seated.

The Prophet adored his daughter so much that he stated:
"Fatema is a part of me and whoever hurts her

has hurt me and whoever hurts me has earned the wrath of God Almighty."

The Prophet also narrated:
"*Whoever becomes the father of a girl; he should neither hurt her nor treat her with contempt nor show preference over her to his sons in kindness and affection. Both boys and girls should be treated alike. God will grant him Paradise in return for kind treatment towards the daughter."*

After the death of her mother Khadija, Fatima looked after her father the Prophet of Islam so devoutly that Muhammad used to call her "Umme Abiha", i.e. the mother her father.

Prophet Muhammad always spoke about justice and kindness towards a child whether it be a daughter or a son. Once a person in the presence of Prophet Muhammad kissed his son and put him on his lap and did not do the same for his daughter who was with him. The Prophet became upset and told the man that he was being unjust and that he should have also kissed his daughter and placed her on the other lap.

6. GOOD CONDUCT

Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded. (Quran 16:90)

And spend in the way of Allah and cast not yourselves to perdition with your own hands, and do good (to others); surely Allah loves the doers of good. (Quran 2:195)

Islam stresses on good conduct from the very core. Islam defines a true believer in the following narration;
"Shall I not introduce 'a believer' to you? A believer is the one whom other believers trust with their souls and wealth. Shall I introduce 'a Muslim' to you? A Muslim is the one from whose hand and tongue others are safe.... It is unlawful for a believer to do wrong against another believer, or leave him/her in a lurch, or backbite against him/her, or suddenly reject him/her." *Prophet Muhammad (Al-Kafi, vol. 2, p. 235)*

Although he had come as a guide, mentor and teacher to the people, Prophet Muhammad never created any barriers between himself and them. One would expect that being their leader, he had every opportunity to keep himself aloof and surround himself with guards and servants but this was not in his character.

As he preached equality to all, he practiced it himself. When people would visit him, he would sit with them and spend time talking to them not only about religion, but also about their lives. Offering encouragement, sympathy and advice, he gained the love of the general public so that they constantly turned to him for comfort. The prophet lived a normal and simple life with dignity.

The prophet, advises his followers;
"*we must treat others with the utmost respect and consideration and always be on the lookout to avoid hurting them in any way".*

Prophet Muhammad always said:
"The best of you are those who have the best morals."

The Prophet(s) was known never to criticize or listen to criticism about people, as he did not want to be prejudiced against anyone.

7. HONESTY IN TRADE

Give full measure and weight with justice."(Quran 6:152)

"Woe to the defrauders, who, when they take the measure (for themselves) from men, they take it fully. But when they measure out to others or weigh out for them, they give less". (Quran 83:1-3)

These verses were revealed as a large number of the inhabitants of Medina were tradesmen at that time. They used to deal fraudulently and many of their dealings were religiously, particularly a trader by the name of Abu - Jahinah who had two scales for measuring- one which he used when he wanted to buy from others and the other was for when he used to sell.

No trader or business person should allow greed to overcome his or her sense of well-being for the community.

The prophet's grandson and 6th imam Jaffar Sadiq, once gave his assistant some money to trade on his behalf.

The assistant bought some merchandise and joined a trade caravan going to Egypt. On the

way, they received word that the merchandise that they were carrying was in high demand in Egypt. The assistant and other traders made a pact among themselves not to sell their goods for less than 100% profit.

When the assistant returned to Medina, he went to imam Sadiq and presented the money to the imam. The Imam asked how he managed to double his investment. The assistant explained the pact of the 100% profit.

The face of Imam Sadiq reflected anger as he separated the profit from his initial investment. He gave back the profit to the man saying, "I do not need the profit which is obtained by injustice.

When Imam Ali was the ruler, every morning he used to enter the markets and stand in the middle of the market and call:

"O traders fear God". "Ask God for goodness, and be easy in your dealing with people, so you may be blessed. And approach the customers (in dealing), with patience Restrain from swearing; and avoid telling lies. Stand against cruelty, and treat the oppressed justly.

Do not approach usury. Give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due: commit not evil in the land with intent to do mischief." Narrated by imam Baqir

8. Humility

"The servants of the Merciful (God) are those who walk on the earth in humility." (Quran 25:63)

Islam describes true humbleness as one who remembers God constantly, the one who continuously thanks Him for His countless blessings that has conferred upon him, and one who considers himself superior to no one.

The lives of the Holy Prophet and his family were also based on these principles. They sat with the poor, shared their meals and treated them in a brotherly manner. The Holy Prophet himself reprimanded the arrogant people and taught them the lesson of humility and politeness.

The prophet and his family used to practice humility even when eating their meals. They would remove their shoes and sit on the ground with respect and eat their food with utmost humility. They would begin by taking God's name and end in giving the lord thanks for providing for them.

The humility of Prophet Muhammad was so great that whenever he came to a gathering he never sat on a prominent place. He would sit on the ground on the nearest vacant place he found. Whenever foreign representatives of countries brought some communication or wanted to meet the Holy Prophet they had to ask, “Who among you is Muhammad?” They saw that there was no distinction at all; that here all were equal; there was nothing like protocol. All were sitting in a circle. Then the Holy Prophet used to say, “Yes, I am Muhammad, how may I help you?” (Excerpt from the book Hulyatul Abrar vol 1 pg. 117)

Once a poor man came to visit the Prophet and sat amongst a group. He happened to take a place near a rich man who made a face while moved his fine garment he was wearing, away from the poor man.

The Prophet was not pleased by this action. The rich man saw the prophet’s expression and apologized, offering half of his wealth to the poor man in compensation.

The poor man accepted his apology but rejected his money, saying "I fear that by becoming rich I too will behave the way this man did, so I do not want his money."

The prophet's grandson and the 5th imam Muhammad Baqir would spread his cloak out for the poor and needy to sit on, when they visited him.

Prophet Muhammad has said :
"Indeed, the most beloved of you to me and the nearest of you to my position on the Day of Judgement are the best of you in nature and in humility; and the furthest of you from me are the vainglorious, that is the arrogant." *(Excerpt from the book living the right way)*

Imam Ali advised a governor he had appointed:
"Be humble to people, meet them gently and receive them with a cheerful face."

A verse that quotes the advice of a wise man called Luqman to his son:

And do not turn your face away from people in contempt, nor go about in the land exulting overmuch; surely Allah does not love any self-conceited boaster. And pursue the right course in your going about and lower your voice; surely he most hateful of voices is braying of the ass." (Quran 31:18)

9. JUSTICE FOR ALL

O you who believe! Be maintainers of justice, bearers of witness of God's sake, though it may be against your own selves or (your) parents or near relatives; if he be rich or poor, (Quran 4:135)

Imam Ali once advised his son;
"My son, make yourself the measure for dealings between you and others. Thus, you should desire for others what you desire for yourself and hate for others what you hate for yourself. Do not oppress as you would not like to be oppressed. Do good to others just as you would like good to be done to you. Regard bad for yourself whatever you regard bad for others. Accept that from others, which you would like others to accept from you. Do not talk about what you do not know even though what you know be very little. Do not say to others what you do not like to be said to you."

The prophet's successor Imam Ali was known as one of the best exemplar of Honesty and justice after the prophet, which is best demonstrated in the following incident .

A candle was burning by Ali's desk, as he was counting and recording all the revenue and the expenses of the State Treasury .This was when he was the leader of the Muslim Nation.

Just then two men appeared. They had some personal business with Ali. As they sat down, Ali extinguished the lamp he was using and ordered another lamp be brought from his house. The perplexed visitors asked why he did that.

Imam Ali replied: *The oil in that torch belonged to the public fund and it was not right to speak to you under its light*.

Another incident it is recorded that once Imam Ali's brother Aqeel, requested more than his fair share from the Public Treasury. He reckoned his brother would be able to pull some strings. Ali flatly denied his brother's request, telling him he has to be fair and just to all.

Ali instructed his officers not to oppress the people. All his affairs were decided with justice and equity. The officer who committed even a bit of oppression or tyranny was removed from office immediately.

Ali was so particular about imparting justice that his following statement has been immortalized;

"Even if all the seven regions of the world and whatever is under the sky is offered to me so that I may disobey God and take away unjustly the husk of barley from an ant I shall not do so.

The United Nations has advised Arab countries to take Imam Ali as an example in establishing a government based on justice and democracy and encouraging knowledge.

The United Nations Development Programme in its 2002 Arab Human Development Report, distributed around the world, listed six maxims of Imam Ali about an ideal and just governance, which are as follows:

1. He who has appointed himself an Imam (ruler) of the people must begin by teaching himself before teaching others, his teaching of others must be first by setting an example rather than with words, for he who begins by teaching and educating himself is more worthy of respect than he who teaches and educates others.

2. Your concern with developing the land should be greater than your concern with

collecting taxes, for the latter can only be obtained by developing; whereas he who seeks revenue without development destroys the country and the people.

3. *Seek the company of the learned and the wise in search of solving the problems of your country and the righteousness of your people.*

4. No good can come in keeping silent or in speaking out of ignorance.

5. *The righteous are men of virtue, whose logic is straightforward, whose dress is* not *designed to impress, whose path is modest, whose actions are many and who is undeterred by difficulties.*

6. *Choose the best among your people to administer justice among them. Choose someone who does not easily give up, who is unruffled by enmities, someone who will not persist in wrongdoing, who will not hesitate to pursue right once he knows it, someone whose heart knows no greed, who will not be satisfied with a minimum of explanation without seeking the maximum of understanding.*

10. LOOK AFTER THE NEEDY

And give to the near of kin his due and (to) the needy and the wayfarer, and do not squander wastefully. (Quran17:26)

The Qur'an highlights the rights of relatives and the needy as well as the wayfarer and, generally speaking, the issue of spending one's wealth, without immoderation and extravagance.

The prophet's successor Imam Ali spent all that he earned to help the poor and the needy, while he lived in the simplest manner. 'Ali loved agriculture and spent much of his time digging wells, planting trees and cultivating fields. But all the fields that he cultivated or wells that he built he gave in endowment to the poor. His endowments were known as the "alms of Ali".

Another great personality, lady Khadijah, the wife of the holy prophet never closed the doors of her house to any poor person. She was always at hand whenever a poor person wanted to talk to her or wanted something from her. She could not bear the thought of any needy person leaving her house empty handed. Lady Khadijah paid special attention to the orphans and widows. That is why her house was called

"The house of hope and security. She was also known as the “Mother of the Orphans".

Fatima used to mill barley and wheat for the poor people of Medina who had no querns.

The 6th imam has said; *“Cure your illness by giving charity, and remove troubles and mishaps by giving charity, and increase sustenance with charity. Charity banishes evil from you. When you give charity it goes unto the hand of GOD before it goes unto the hand of the needy”* imam Jaffar Al-Sadiq

When Ali was asked to be the Caliph, he was very just and kind to his people. He never favored anyone and he lived like the poorest of them. He wore patched clothes and ate very simple food and slept very little. Ali never allowed his clothes, food or lifestyle to be better than that of the poorest of his subjects. *(a closer look at Islam by syed B Ali)*

Ali would never let money accumulate in the government treasury as he would immediately distribute it to the poor and needy.

11. PREJUDICE&RACISM

O mankind! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that you may know one another. The noblest of you in the sight of God is the one who is most righteous…(Qur'an, 49:13)

God does not tolerate any form of superiority that one experiences over another. The best example is Satan being dispelled from God's kingdom of special mercy due to his arrogance and pride over Adam: *(Satan)] said: "I am better than he, you created me from fire, and you created him (man) from clay." (God) said: "Then get out from here, for verily, you are outcast." (Qur'an Chapter 38: 76-77).*

Islam abhors any form of racism. This can be beautifully exemplified when Muslims of all races, status and color stand shoulder to shoulder in the congregational prayers.

In a speech, the prophet Muhammad declared: *"Surely all of mankind – from the time of Adam until our time – are like the teeth of a comb (all equal to one another) and there is no greatness for an `Arab over a non-`Arab and no greatness for a red-skinned person over a black-skinned*

person, except due to one's consciousness of God (taqwa)." *Ikhtisas Vol 34*

These teachings were also firmly established by all prophets. Prophet Muhammad showed special affection for Salman Farsi who was a Persian and Bilal, a black Ethiopian slave, as the caller/announcer of the daily prayers.

The Prophet said: "*Whosoever possesses in his heart prejudice in any of its forms such as tribalism, racism, even to the extent of a mustard seed, God will not raise him on the Day of Resurrection as a believer.* *al-Kafi, vol. 2 hadith no.3*

Imam Ali, in his letter to Malik al-Ashtar on appointing him as the governor of Egypt, wrote:
*"Remember, Malik, that among your subjects there are two kinds of people: those who are your brothers in faith or those who are your equals in humanity. Hence let your mercy and compassion come to their rescue... (*Nahjul Balagha*, Sermon #53)*

12. RENDERING TRUST

Surely God commands you to make over trusts to their owners and that when you judge between people you judge with justice; surely God admonishes you with what is excellent; surely God is all Seeing, Hearing. (Quran 4:58)

Trustworthiness is an Islamic and humanistic moral virtue that emerges from a mutual trust between the owner of the trust and the one entrusted with it who will promise that he will keep it and won't betray it.

During the first forty years of his life, before Prophet Muhammad had proclaimed prophet hood, his reputation amongst the people far and wide was well known. The people acknowledged his sincerity, honesty and his brilliant manners. It became such that everyone referred to him as *al-Amin* (the honest) and *al-Sadiq*(the truthful).

After he proclaimed his prophet hood, some people accepted Islam based on the morals and ethics of this great prophet. However even those who stubbornly resisted still trusted

Muhammad so much that they continued to they deposit their valuables with him for safe keeping when they were travelling. Visitors coming into the city of Mecca used to put their belongings in the safe custody of the Holy Prophet. When the Prophet had to leave Mecca and migrated to Madina he gave all the items that were in his custody, to his successor ImamAli and said:

"*Proclaim loudly, every morning and evening in Mecca that whoever had kept anything with Muhammad, may collect it."*

Imam Ali said: *The best act of belief is trustworthiness while the worst of morals is betrayal.*

The 5th Imam Al-Baqir said: *"There are three things which God, the Mighty and the Glorious has not permitted anyone to forsake: returning a trust to its owner, irrespective of whether he is a good person or an evil one; fulfilling one's promises and covenants, irrespective of whether it has been made to a good person or an evil one; being good and kind towards one's parents, irrespective of whether they are good or evil."*

13. RESPECT FOR PARENTS

All religions and all societies have given parents an honorable status. We find ourselves indebted to our parents, particularly our mother. She not only nourished us in her womb, but went through pain and suffering. She loved us even before we were born. She toiled when we were totally helpless infants. She spent sleepless nights caring for us. Our parents, as a team provided for all our needs.

Islam takes immense importance in the respect and care of parents. God has made reference to parents least 15 times in the Holy Qur'an. Two verses are given below:

"We have enjoined on man kindness to his parents; in pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth." (46:15)

And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him, and goodness to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, say not to them (so much as) "Ugh" nor chide them, and speak to them a generous word.

And make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion, and say: O my Lord have compassion on them, just as they brought me up (when I was) little. *(17:23-24)*

Prophet Muhammad, stressing on the importance of a mother, has said
"Heaven is under the feet of one's mother."

While Imam Ali has said:
Do not use the sharpness of your speech on the mother who taught you how to speak.

The prophet's grandson, in his compilation of the treatise of rights has said the following;

The right of your mother is that you know that she carried you where no one carries anyone, she gave to you of the fruit of her heart that which no one gives to anyone, and she protected you with all her organs. She did not care if she went hungry as long as you ate, if she was thirsty as long as you drank, if she was naked as long as you were clothed, if she was in the sun as long as you were in the shade. She gave up sleep for your sake; she protected you from heat and cold, all in order that you might belong to her. You will not be able to show her

gratitude, unless through God's help and giving success. ***The psalms of Islam (sahifa al sajiddiya) `Ali ibn Hussain***

Once, while conversing with God, Prophet Moses requested: "O' Lord! I desire to meet the person, who is to be my neighbor in heaven."

God informed him that his neighbor was a butcher living in an adjacent town. Moses, intrigued on why a mere butcher would be so elevated, set out in search of this butcher and eventually found him, busy selling meat.

When night fell, Moses approached the butcher and introduced himself as a traveller looking for lodging for the night. The butcher, unaware of that he was talking to a prophet, invited Moses to his house.

At home, the butcher began to prepare for the evening meal. After that, he served the food to Moses and excused himself. Moses watched as the butcher climbed up a loft and gently bring down a large basket. In the basket was an old and frail woman.

The butcher fed and washed the woman and then carried her back to the loft. Moses noticed the old lady's lips move as she mumbled to the butcher.

Moses inquired, "Who is this lady?"

The butcher replied, “She is my mother who is unable to look after herself. I try to serve and look after her.”

Moses questioned further, “What did your mother whisper before you took her upstairs?”

He responded, “Whenever I wash her and feed her, she prays- *may God forgive you and place you in the company and of Prophet Moses in Paradise.”*

Hearing this, Moses smiled and said; “I give you glad tidings-God has accepted your mother’s prayers.”

A young man was on his deathbed when the Holy Prophet Muhammad came and sat near him. The prophet noticed that the youth was in discomfort and asked him to recite a prayer. However the youth could not respond. The prophet enquired if his mother was present? A woman responded, “Yes, I am his mother.”

The Holy Prophet asked, “Are you displeased with him?”

‘Yes, O Prophet, we have not spoken to each other since the last six years.’

The Holy Prophet asked this woman to forgive her son, which she did and at once the youth began reciting the prayer and passed away peacefully.

14. RESPECT OF NON MUSLIMS

God does not forbid you from respecting those who have not made war against you on account of (your) religion, and have not driven you forth from your homes, that you show them kindness and deal with them justly; surely God loves the doers of justice. (Quran 60:8)

Because Prophet Muhammad was spreading the word of God, changing the lives of many, some people in Mecca who had stuck fast to their idols and harassed the prophet in many ways by throwing stones or rubbish at him .

One old woman made a habit of throwing rubbish on Prophet Muhammad, from her balcony, whenever he passed through the Alley where her house was located. This was a regular event. However, the prophet would pass silently without showing any anger or annoyance.

This continued for a while after which it suddenly stopped. The prophet was passing by one day when a neighbor informed him that the old woman was taken ill. Immediately, the prophet went to her house and requested if he could meet the old woman.

The old woman thought that the prophet had come to take his revenge when her defenses were down, but the Prophet assured her that he had come to ask about her condition and look after her needs. The Prophet sat by her side and prayed for her. The prophet visited her until she was well again.

It has been narrated that during the rule of Imam Ali, he saw an old blind man begging on the streets. He was shocked, asking why a beggar was on the streets under his government.

One man commented that he was a Christian, where upon Ali admonished the man saying:

"When this man was strong, you used his strength for your benefit, now that he is old and weak, you have left him alone? Where is the sense of justice and compassion?"

Ali thereafter instructed that the old man be given a regular pension from the public treasury. (Excerpt from the book*Wasa'il al-Shia*)

Yet another story has been narrated that one day outside the city of Kufa, two men, a Muslim and a Christian met on the road. The Muslim was going to Kufa while the Christian man was travelling further on. Since a part of their journey was common, they decided to travel together.

The two men conversed as they walked along until the Christian man realized that the road to Kufa had passed but the Muslim man had not taken that road, instead was continuing to accompany him. On inquiring why he did not, the Muslim replied *"my prophet has said, 'whenever two persons are travelling together on the same path, they establish reciprocal rights upon each other'. Now you have got a right upon me and for the sake of that right I wish to walk a few steps with you, and then, of course, I shall return unto my own path."* The Muslim was none other than Imam Ali.

Historian Professor M.G Reynolds writes in his book that; *"Ali was so popular even among the non-Muslims that when he died, all the Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians of Kufa, particularly their women and children who were personally looked after by Ali, lamented his death and wept as one does for one's father. Mourning was observed even in Jerusalem and the Lord Bishop also could not restrain his tears."* ***(Prof. M. G. Reynold's Book on Islam, Chapter 3.)***

15. RESTRAINING ANGER

..and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men; and God loves the doers of good (to others). (3:134)

A simple man from the desert once arrived in Medina and came to the Prophet Muhammad seeking advice. The holy Prophet advised him in just one sentence: "Control your anger." When the man returned home, he found his tribe under siege as one of his tribesman had stolen some items from a neighboring tribe, who had retaliated.

Instinctively the man prepared himself to defend his tribe, not caring who was at fault. Suddenly he recalled the advice from the Holy Prophet to control his anger, prompting him to reflect on what he was about to do.

The man went forward and addressed the leaders of the opposite side: "Brothers, what is this war for? If my people have stolen your property, can we not sit together and resolve the problem?

The leaders from the opposite side felt totally disarmed by this new approach. They soon

realized that bloodshed was not the answer and decided to sit down and reconcile.

Another incident occurred a few years after the prophet passed away. Syria was governed by those who wanted to take over the Muslim leadership and had put out false propaganda to discredit the prophet's family.

A man, who had been brainwashed by these lies, was visiting the city of Medina. The Syrian met up with Imam Hassan and immediately started to hurl abuse insult Hassan and his father Ali.

Hassan controlled his anger and instead of reacting in a like manner, greeted the Syrian cordially asking if he was tired from the long journey and inviting him to his house to rest.

The Syrian, taken aback with the impeccable manners of Hassan , declined the invitation initially, but finally agreed. After the Syrian sampled the genuine hospitality and kindness of the prophet's grandson, realized that he was misled and apologized for his outburst.

The Holy Prophet has commanded, *"If one of you finds some of this [anger] in himself, if he is standing, he should sit, and if he is sitting, he should lie down. If he is still angry, he should*

perform ablution (ritual purification) with cold water or take a bath, for fire can only be extinguished with water."

Prophet Muhammad advised some people who were wrestling: *"He is not strong and powerful who wrestles and throws people down, but he is strong who withholds himself from anger."*

The 6th successor after the Prophet- Jaffer Sadiq has said:
"Anger is the key (that opens the door) to all kinds of vices.

The 7th successor After the Prophet- Musa al- Kadhim is the best example of one who swallowed and restrained his anger. He was tortured and imprisoned by the ruling oppressors of his time until his martyrdom in prison. He controlled his anger and bore his troubles with patience.

Prophet Muhammad has narrated: "*Whoever can swallow his anger, most surely God will fill his heart with peace and faith."*

16. RIGHTS OF NEIGHBORS

..and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor further away (Quran 4:36)

Islam has great respect for the mutual rights and duties of neighbors. Not only next door neighbors but neighbors further away. In fact Islam considers neighbors as those who reside **forty houses** on each side of a Muslim's house. A neighbor may also be one's colleague at work or a college roommate or a fellow rider in mass transport e.g. bus, train etc.

Prophet Muhammad, commenting on the rights of the neighbor has said: *"It is to help him if he asks your help, to lend him if he asks to borrow from you, to satisfy his needs if he becomes poor, to console him if he is visited by an affliction, to congratulate him if is met with good fortune, to visit him if he becomes ill, to attend his funeral if he dies, not to make your house higher than his without his consent lest you deny him the breeze of air, to offer him fruit when you buy some or to take it to your home*

secretly if you do not give him, nor to send out your children with it (fruit) so as not to upset his children, nor to bother him by the tempting smell of your food unless you send him some." (*The Scale of Wisdom, P.234/235 no.1308)*

The prophet's grandson and 4th imam has also narrated in his works that;
"The right of your neighbor is that you guard him when he is absent, honor him when he is present, and aid him when he is wronged. You do not pursue anything of his that is shameful; if you know of any evil from him, you conceal it. If you know that he will accept your counsel, you counsel him in that which is between him and you. You do not forsake him in difficulty, you release him from his stumble, you forgive his sin, and you associate with him generously. And there is no strength save in God."

The psalms of Islam (sahifa al sajiddiya) by the `Ali ibn al-Husayn

The prophet also said that:
"Whoever believes in God and in the Day of Resurrection must respect his neighbors. The right of neighbors upon a person is like the right of a mother upon her children."

Imam Hassan narrated:
I saw my mother [Fatima] standing in prayer. She was continuously kneeling and performing prostrations till dawn broke. I would hear her pray for the health and welfare for all her neighbors, but she did not at all pray for herself. I said, 'Oh mother why did you not pray for yourself like you prayed for others?' so she replied, 'Oh my son, first remember the neighbor and thereafter your own house.'

Prophet Muhammad was told of a woman who prayed and fasted a lot and gave donations generously, but whose neighbors complained of her abusive tongue. He said that God would not be pleased with her. On the other end When the Prophet was told of another woman who did not do all those extra acts of worship other than the five daily prayers, but whose neighbors were happy with her, he said that she would be in Paradise.

In the book Bihar al Anwar vol. 43, it is written that the prophet's daughter Fatima often carried water for her neighbors who were too weak or old. She filled the skin from wells and carried it to them until her back was affected.

FURTHER READING

The above information is just a brief insight into the moral teachings of Islam. For further information and more in depth detail, we recommend the below listed books and websites:

1.A Restatement of the History of Islam and Muslims by Sayyid Ali Ashgar Razwy
Available online at https://www.al-islam.org.

2. Nahjul Balagha – a collection of letters, sayings and speeches of Imam Ali
Available online at https://www.al-islam.org or www.duas.org/pdfs/Nahjul-Balagha.pdf

3.The Psalms Of Islam - Al Sahifa Al Sajjadiyya By Imam Ali Zaynul Abidin
Available online at https://www.al-islam.org

4.Morals & Manners of the Holy Imams by Sayyid Zafar Hasan Amrohi
Available online at https://www.al-islam.org .

5. The charter of rights by Imam Ali Zainul abidin
http://www.islamicmobility.com/